

BULK RATE
U. S. POSTAGE PAID
Washington State
Department of Printing

37th District Session Wrap

Rep. Sharon Tomiko Santos

PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

Printed on recycled paper

Strong Schools

Quality public education remains my highest priority as your legislator. You urged me to focus on supporting our teachers, reducing class size in the early grades, and expanding early childhood education opportunities. Here's what I've done:

- I co-sponsored legislation to establish the *Better Schools Fund* which directs non-dedicated state lottery proceeds to school districts for enhancing basic education programs. School districts may use the flexible funds to reduce class size, create extended learning and early childhood education opportunities, or implement parent and community involvement programs. The House budget includes \$57.5 million for the Better Schools Fund.
- Future Teachers Conditional Scholarships* will provide up to \$4,000 in loans to 200 students entering the teaching profession. These loans may be repaid by teaching in a Washington state public school. I also helped secure \$885,000 in the House budget to start-up the Future Teachers Conditional Scholarship program.

Secure Families

Nothing is more important to a thriving community than the health, welfare, and security of our children and families. You asked me to concentrate on setting up out-of-school activities for students, on supporting prevention and intervention programs for youth, and on protecting our right to quality, affordable healthcare.

- I prime-sponsored a bill to promote *After-School Care for Middle-School students*. Although this legislation did not pass, I ensured \$1.4 million in the House budget for grants to schools and community-based organizations that provide after-school tutoring or other age-appropriate programs to middle-school students who need safe, productive alternatives to being at home alone.
- I also sponsored the *Patients' Bill of Rights* legislation to give consumers greater protections in the decisions affecting your health. Recently signed into law, the Patients' Bill of Rights assures you and your family the right to choose your own doctor and see a specialist if needed, the right to appeal when you've been denied health care services, and the right to sue your health care provider if you've been injured by the denial of coverage.



Rep. Sharon Tomiko Santos 37th District Legislative Update

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Last fall, I asked for your help in prioritizing the important issues that affect our families and communities in the 37th District. Thanks to your overwhelming response, I've been able to advocate for policies and programs that promote our vision for strong schools, secure families, good jobs, a healthy environment, and a responsive government.

This newsletter outlines some of our key successes in the 2000 legislative session, including:

- Creating a Better Schools fund
- Enacting a Patient's Bill of Rights
- Extending unemployment benefits for displaced workers, and
- Sustaining public transit.

These achievements are particularly remarkable given the challenges presented by a 49-49 tie in the House of Representatives and, more important, by the \$1.1 billion fiscal impact of Initiative 695.

Under these circumstances, the Legislature was not able to pass a supplemental operating budget in 60 days. Usually, lawmakers craft a two-year budget during the 105-day session in odd-numbered years. The supplemental budget typically makes minor adjustments to the two-year budget. But since I-695 reduced state revenues by \$1.1 billion, the 1999-2001 biennial budget must be completely rewritten. This task, daunting in a long session, proved impossible in the short session, so the Legislature is working overtime as I write this newsletter to respond to the challenges of I-695.

In addition to cutting the state's general fund that supports public education and other critical state services, I-695 reduced funding for cities, counties, public health, public transit and law enforcement. We clearly do not have enough money to make up the entire shortfall, but we are doing our best to find creative ways to bridge the most critical funding gaps while still meeting our many responsibilities to the people of Washington state. I've highlighted some details of the different budget proposals inside these pages.

I appreciate your continued efforts to keep me informed about what matters to you and your family. Your calls, letters, and e-mail messages allow me to better represent the real voices of 37th District and to help move forward our collective vision of a stronger, healthier, and more vibrant community.

Again, thank you for the privilege of serving you.
Sincerely,

Sharon Tomiko Santos
State Representative
37th District

Session 2000 Highlights

Before the beginning of the 2000 session, I asked for your input and ideas on a variety of issues that would help us achieve our vision of Working Together for One Washington. While we continue to work for key legislation to address some of these issues, I am pleased to let you know that we’ve made substantial progress on many of your priorities. Below is a brief description of what we’ve accomplished and a status report on the items still pending in the special session of the Legislature.

Good Jobs

Washington state helps lead the nation in fueling an unprecedented economic prosperity but, even in this region, many people continue to struggle and some industries are forced to lay off workers. You advocated for increased access to education and job skills programs relevant to the new economy, for retraining opportunities that enable laid-off workers to transition into long-term careers, and for policies to recruit and retain good business that offer family-wage jobs with meaningful benefits.

- *The Worker Retraining and Tax Fairness Act* gives displaced workers – especially those in timber, aerospace, and fishing occupations – extended unemployment benefits while retraining for jobs in high demand like construction or computer programming. At the same time, this legislation offers tax relief to businesses by averting a \$580 million tax increase during the next six years.
- I co-sponsored legislation to create a pilot *Skills Gap Training* program that offers education and training opportunities for good jobs in growing industries. Developed in cooperation with our state community and technical colleges and the electronics, software, and food industries, the Skills Gap Training program receives \$600,000 in the House budget.

Responsive Government

I co-sponsored the companion bill to SB 6402, the *Civil Service Reform* legislation, which is – at this writing – stalled in the tied House. This bill would increase the flexibility of government agencies to contract out for services while ensuring that public funds are spent wisely.

At the same time, the legislation would expand the collective bargaining rights of our dedicated state employees to include wages, hours, terms, and conditions of employment. State employers are permitted, though not required, to bargain over retirement and health care benefits.

I regret to report that this bill failed to receive a public hearing in the House of Representatives. I join with many other members from both parties in continuing to find a way to pass Civil Service Reform before we conclude the 2000 special session.

Budgets

By far, the highest priority you identified on the Pre-Session Survey was a solution to traffic gridlock. The passage of I-695 and the subsequent loss of \$1.1 billion in revenues severely impacted our statewide transportation system of roads, highways, and ferries as well as local public transit and regional rail operations to move people and goods.

The *House Supplemental Transportation budget*, which passed by a vote of 84-14, reflects our best effort to maintain existing transportation services by providing transitional funds to stem service cuts caused by I-695 and by permitting local governments and transit districts to increase local option sales taxes with voter approval.

The budget partially restores ferry services and funding for freight mobility. Sound Transit will receive \$80 million in the next four years. Although I have my differences with Sound Transit, I fully understand and support this request for a state contribution to an important regional transit system that will also serve our 37th District community.

The *House Supplemental Operating budget* helps implement many of the policies enacted through separate legislation, but it is often a policy-making document in its own right. Although the House passed a supplemental operating budget, I voted against it because **this budget simply goes too far in compromising funding for vital public services.**

See the chart below for a comparison of the House Democrats budget proposal and the compromise budget.

Healthy Environment

We live in one of the most magnificent regions of the world: we are blessed with its beauty and entrusted with its care. You let me know that protecting our precious resources – water, air, and land – is as important as protecting ourselves from harm.

- After the tragic Olympic Pipeline accident in Bellingham, my colleagues and I co-sponsored a *Pipeline Safety* bill to enhance the state’s oversight of pipeline safety to the extent permitted under federal law. The legislation strengthens pipeline training standards, improves accessibility to pipeline-location information, and establishes penalties for companies who fail to notify authorities about pipeline excavations.
- I co-sponsored *Oil Spill Prevention* legislation to dedicate tug boats to assist tankers navigating our coastal waters. This legislation did not pass, but a rescue tug is funded at \$1.7 million in the House budget. In the aftermath of the Intertanko accident, the Legislature petitioned the federal government to authorize Washington state to enact environmental and safety standards that exceed federal requirements.

	House Democratic budget	Compromise budget
Early Head Start	\$11.9 million (federal funds)	\$0
Extended Learning	\$23 million	\$0
Parent Involvement	\$500,000	\$0
Character Education	\$350,000	\$0
Sexual Assault Programs	\$1 million	\$300,000
Indigent Defense	\$5.4 million	\$4 million
Child Protective Services	No cut	Cut \$3.7 million
Ticket to Work	\$649,000	\$0
Individual Health Market	\$4.5 million	\$2.1 million
Graduate Student Health Insurance	\$908,000	\$450,000
Tobacco Prevention and Control	\$20 million	\$15 million
As you can see from this small list of budget items, the funding levels approved in the compromise budget will have a negative impact on many families and communities in the 37th District. I am working to ensure that the final budget passed by both the House and the Senate restores the funding levels initially proposed by the House Democratic Caucus.		

To Contact Rep. Sharon Tomiko Santos

Hotline: 800-562-6000

Hearing impaired:
800-635-9993

320 John L. O'Brien Building
PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

(360) 786-7944
Fax: (360) 786-7317

Seattle office:
1625 S. Main St. Ste 310
Seattle, WA

(206) 720-3056

E-mail: santos_sh@leg.wa.gov

Home page:
http://www.leg.wa.gov/house/members/d37_1.htm

House of Representatives:
<http://www.leg.wa.gov>

State web page:
<http://access.wa.gov>

37th District Legislative Update